



HEALTH CARE AND HUMAN SERVICES POLICY, RESEARCH, AND CONSULTING—WITH REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE.

Colorado's Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Community Access Grant

Winter 2011 Evaluation *(revised June 2011 with additional findings)*

Prepared for: State of Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Colorado Works

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Background

In October 2006, the Colorado Works Division of the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) became one of two grantees awarded the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood (PRF) Community Access Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (HHS-2206-ACF-OFA-FR-0144). The primary goal of the Initiative was to improve the well-being of Colorado's children by: 1) strengthening and increasing the involvement and parenting skills of fathers through community-based direct services, including healthy marriage/relationship and responsible parenting activities as well as activities that foster economic stability; and 2) building system capacity and community awareness through state-level coordination and public outreach activities.

The amount of child support payments made by dads increased 37 percent after participating in a PRF fatherhood program. There was also a 62 percent decrease in arrears owed by dads after participating in Jefferson County's *Child Support Enforcement Fatherhood Program*.

CDHS has awarded 63 programs contracts over the 5-year course of the Initiative and approximately 5,000 fathers have been served. Beyond providing financial support to grantees, CDHS also developed a training and technical assistance strategy to support grantees' implementation and delivery of their fatherhood programs and data collection efforts. A significant component of Colorado's PRF Initiative is the *Be There for Your Kids* statewide public awareness campaign – launched in October 2007 and led by The Bawmann Group. The goals of this campaign were to increase enrollment and participation in PRF fatherhood programs and drive fathers to the program website (www.ColoradoDads.com).

The evaluation of the PRF Initiative incorporated data from multiple sources including: 1) analysis of FY 2009 and 2010 program data; 2) site visits / interviews with four spotlighted fatherhood programs; 3) individual data collected from spotlighted programs; 4) survey of all currently funded PRF grantees; 5) review of quarterly narrative reports; 6) review of the last 2010 CDHS semi-annual report; and 7) examination of U.S. Census data.

Key Findings

The Center on Fathering conducted a pre/post test of the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory – version 2 for their PRF-funded *Nurturing Fathers* course. A pre to post statistically significant change was observed in participant's ability to be empathetically aware of their children (e.g., sensitivity to the needs of children and the placing those needs in high regard).

Colorado's PRF-funded fatherhood programs operate in urban, suburban and rural settings and serve a racially and ethnically diverse range of participants. The majority of participants served faced significant disadvantages affecting their ability to financially and emotionally support their children (e.g., 53% were unemployed, 67% had a family income of \$5,000 or less, 81% had a history of criminal conviction). Further, 78% of participants did not live with their

child's other parent and 34% had not legally established paternity at the time of enrollment in the program. In addition to offering a diversity of services to meet fathers' needs, including skill-based parenting education, counseling, peer leadership and case management, PRF programs referred participants to a number of external services (e.g., Workforce Office, attorney/legal aid services, and higher education programs). Also, fatherhood programs collaborated with a number of other organizations, including domestic violence providers, probation offices, juvenile and adult correctional facilities, women's resource agencies, child support and child welfare agencies, as well as the TANF/Colorado Works programs to offer services to fathers.

Launched in October 2007, the *Be There for Your Kids* campaign utilized a variety advertising, media relations, web/interactive and community outreach activities to increase awareness of responsible fatherhood in the state. With versions in both English and Spanish, the campaign's website (www.ColoradoDads.com) provides resources for fathers, families, fatherhood practitioners, and parent educators. Since its inception, the Colorado Dads site has received more than 375,000 unique visitors, 1.6 million page views and 4.7 million hits. Also, since its launch, the public awareness campaign has received 14,247 added-value radio and television spots for an additional \$683,860 worth of advertising. During the month of June 2010 alone, media relation efforts focused on the responsible fatherhood message reached more than 3.7 million people. Since 2007, PRF information has been featured in 508 print stories, 49 television stories and 14 radio stories, reaching more than 33 million people.

Conclusions

Capacity building efforts have been successful, as more than 50 fatherhood programs currently operate in Colorado. Further, the public awareness campaign's messaging has proven to resonate in areas such as early childhood education, child support and child welfare. In addition to helping fathers and families, the PRF Initiative also had important impacts on transforming the human services system in Colorado to be more responsive to fathers and increase the awareness of fatherhood issues, as a result of the statewide public awareness campaign and outreach/partnership activities of the fatherhood programs.

A survey of fatherhood program administrators and interviews with four spotlighted fatherhood programs revealed several effective strategies for recruiting/retaining fathers and building program capacity:

- Provide a comprehensive mix of services – e.g., group discussions, one-on-one support, peer leadership, case management;
- Select staff who have a combination of interpersonal qualities (e.g., being a good listener, respecting participants), education, and knowledge of the curricula;
- Include mothers to support the co-parenting process and allow dads to bring their children to meetings;
- Provide food – especially helpful when dads come to the program directly from work;
- Provide transportation assistance and a convenient meeting location;
- Make the meeting space “father friendly” – e.g., hang positive pictures of fathers and their children on the walls, provide reading magazines/reading materials of interest to men;
- Collaborate with other organizations (e.g., Department of Corrections, domestic violence agencies) who support the goals of the fatherhood program;
- Provide fun, informative group activities (e.g., annual community picnic, alumni reunions); and
- Address the potential of domestic violence early and often in the process and create messaging that positive fathering does not include such activities.

Participation in The Piñon Project's Family Resource Center's program was associated with progress in 16 domains of family functioning (e.g., family relations, support network) over time, with the greatest increase and largest effect size in the Parenting Skills domain.

Staff from several participating fatherhood programs reported a number of success stories of fathers who were able to build relationships with their children and children's mothers and overcome barriers to paying child support as a result of participating in the fatherhood program.